



USDA's Management Over the Misuse of Government Vehicles

Audit Report 50099-0003-21

OIG determined whether USDA has processes in place to sufficiently manage its fleet and to detect and prevent USDA employees from misusing Government vehicles.

OBJECTIVE

We assessed whether OPFM effectively enforces controls to prevent and detect the misuse of Government vehicles by USDA employees. This audit is a followup report to a 2017 audit of FSIS' process for resolving employee vehicle misuse complaints.

REVIEWED

We audited fleet management activities at FS and APHIS. We reviewed complaints, driver documentation, and Department and relevant agency-specific policies and procedures. We interviewed OPFM, APHIS, and FS officials at national and regional offices.

RECOMMENDS

OPFM should require agencies to annually justify or dispose of underutilized vehicles and reconcile inventory counts. OPFM should route vehicle misuse complaints to agency investigative units and develop procedures for receiving, recording, and investigating complaints. OPFM should develop procedures for agencies to consistently review driver authorizations.

WHAT OIG FOUND

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) owns or leases close to 41,000 vehicles, a \$260 million operation. The Office of Property and Fleet Management (OPFM) oversees the USDA fleet and provides guidance, but agencies are responsible for enforcing Departmental and Federal requirements.

In 2017, we concluded that both the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) and OPFM needed to improve their controls over the handling of alleged employee vehicle misuse complaints. We followed up by reviewing the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Forest Service (FS) and identified similar issues at both agency and Departmental levels.

First, neither OPFM nor agencies took effective actions to manage the continued use of over 23,000 underutilized vehicles. The agencies did not always submit accurate data and, as a result, OPFM overstated USDA's fleet inventory and underreported, in reports to the General Services Administration (GSA) and Congress, the number of employees who drive their Government vehicles home. Second, agencies did not properly investigate allegations that employees misused Government vehicles because OPFM did not send complaints to an independent employee misconduct investigative unit, as required, nor did it provide clear guidance on what allegation records to maintain. Third, agency employees operated Government vehicles without sufficient documentation to support authorization and qualification requirements. This occurred because OPFM did not provide agencies with procedures to ensure drivers met requirements.

OPFM officials concurred with our findings and recommendations, and we accepted management decision on all 12 recommendations.



United States Department of Agriculture
Office of Inspector General
Washington, D.C. 20250



DATE: September 18, 2018

AUDIT
NUMBER: 50099-0003-21

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SUBJECT: USDA's Management Over the Misuse of Government Vehicles

This report presents the results of the subject audit. Your written responses are included in their entirety at the end of the report. Excerpts from your responses and the Office of Inspector General's position are incorporated in the relevant sections of the report. Based on your written responses, we are accepting management decision for all 12 audit recommendations in the report.

In accordance with Departmental Regulation 1720-1, final action is to be taken within 1 year of each management decision to prevent being listed in the Department's annual Agency Financial

Report. Please follow your internal agency procedures in forwarding final action correspondence to OCFO.

We appreciate the courtesies and cooperation extended to us by members of your staff during our audit fieldwork and subsequent discussions. This report contains publicly available information and will be posted in its entirety to our website (<http://www.usda.gov/oig>) in the near future.

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Background and Objectives

Background

USDA employees drive over 340 million miles a year as they travel across our country to monitor activities at ports, confirm sanitary conditions at slaughterhouses, conserve national resources, support rural development, conduct agricultural research, and accomplish other objectives that support and further USDA's mission. To make this possible, USDA spends nearly \$260 million annually to own, lease, and operate almost 41,000 motor vehicles (vehicles).¹ Of these, USDA owns approximately 31,000 vehicles (76 percent) and leases about 10,000 (24 percent). After evaluating costs and other factors such as agency requirements, mileage, and storage, USDA agencies generally choose to purchase or lease vehicles through the General Services Administration (GSA), though agencies occasionally lease vehicles from a commercial source.² (See Figure 1.)

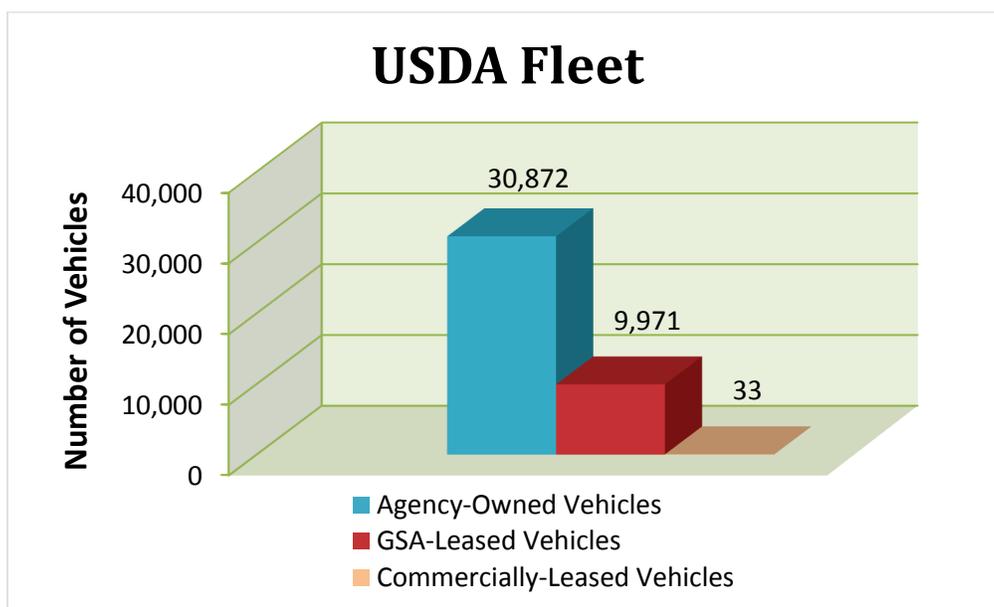


Figure 1: Breakdown of USDA's fleet of agency-owned, GSA-leased, and commercially-leased vehicles.

The Office of Property and Fleet Management

USDA established the Office of Property and Fleet Management (OPFM), within Departmental Administration (formerly known as Departmental Management), to provide oversight of USDA-owned and leased vehicles, in accordance with Federal regulations. OPFM assumed responsibilities regarding USDA's fleet, previously assumed by the Office of Procurement and Property Management. OPFM is responsible for establishing and operating a central monitoring system for USDA vehicles, related activities, and reporting requirements.

¹ This amount includes maintenance, depreciation, and lease and fuel costs.

² USDA is comprised of 29 agencies and offices with nearly 100,000 employees at more than 4,500 locations.

To assist in managing USDA vehicles, OPFM uses fleet management information systems such as GSA’s “Fleet Drive-thru” (for leased vehicles) and GSA’s Federal Fleet Management System (FedFMS) (for owned vehicles), which allow OPFM to identify, collect, and analyze vehicle operation data such as inventory, operating costs, and miles traveled. These information systems help OPFM meet internal and external reporting requirements. OPFM also utilizes information collected from GSA’s “How’s My Driving?” program, which maintains an email portal used by the public as a method to submit complaints of alleged vehicle misuse.

USDA Agencies

Agencies also have a responsibility to manage and direct their vehicle fleets in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and Departmental policies. Through their managers and supervisors, agencies advise employees on Departmental requirements; establish procedures to operate government vehicles; maintain dispatch records; ensure employees are qualified, authorized, and properly licensed; and provide driver training to promote safety.

Each USDA agency uses vehicles to help carry out its unique mission. For example, the Forest Service (FS) uses its vehicles to manage and protect 154 national forests and 20 grasslands in 43 States and Puerto Rico. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) employees drive their vehicles to import and export locations all across the country and drive to sites to conduct crop or animal inspections. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) uses its vehicles to perform inspections at over 6,400 plants that produce meat, poultry, and egg products throughout the United States.

We selected FS and APHIS for our review due to the high number of vehicles in their fleets.³ We audited FSIS in 2017 because it received the highest number of publicly submitted complaints of alleged vehicle misuse at USDA since 2012 (see Finding 2).⁴ Collectively, FS, APHIS, and FSIS represent more than 63 percent of USDA’s vehicle fleet.⁵ Figures 2 and 3 show the USDA agencies with the most owned and GSA-leased vehicles.

³ The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reviewed the vehicle management activities at Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in an audit entitled, *Agencies Should Improve Processes to Identify Underutilized Vehicles* (Apr. 2017). Therefore, we decided not to include NRCS in our review.

⁴ USDA OIG, *Food Safety and Inspection Service’s Process for Handling Vehicle Misuse Complaints* (50099-0002-21, Mar. 2017).

⁵ FS, APHIS, and FSIS vehicles make up 26,115 of the total 40,876 vehicles at USDA.

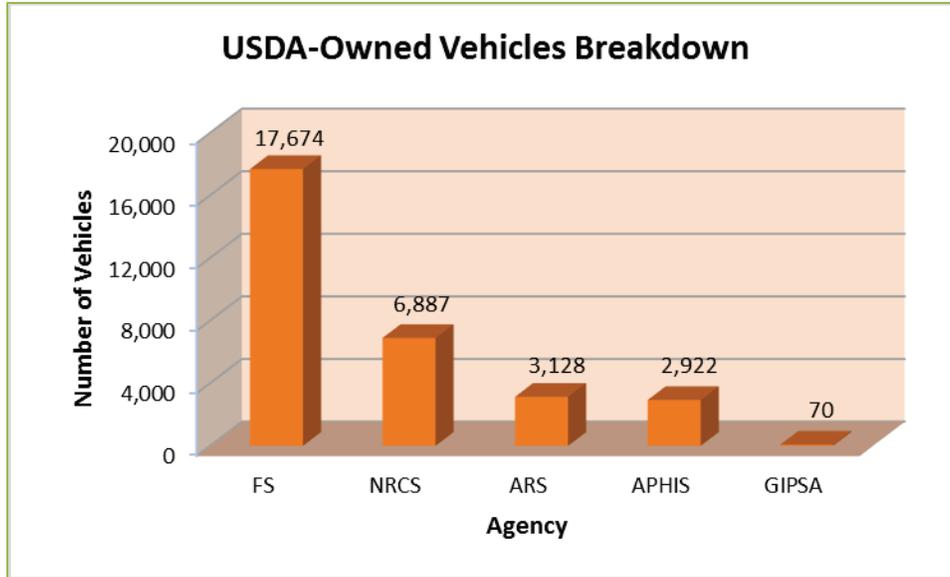


Figure 2: The breakdown of the top five agencies at USDA with the most owned vehicles.

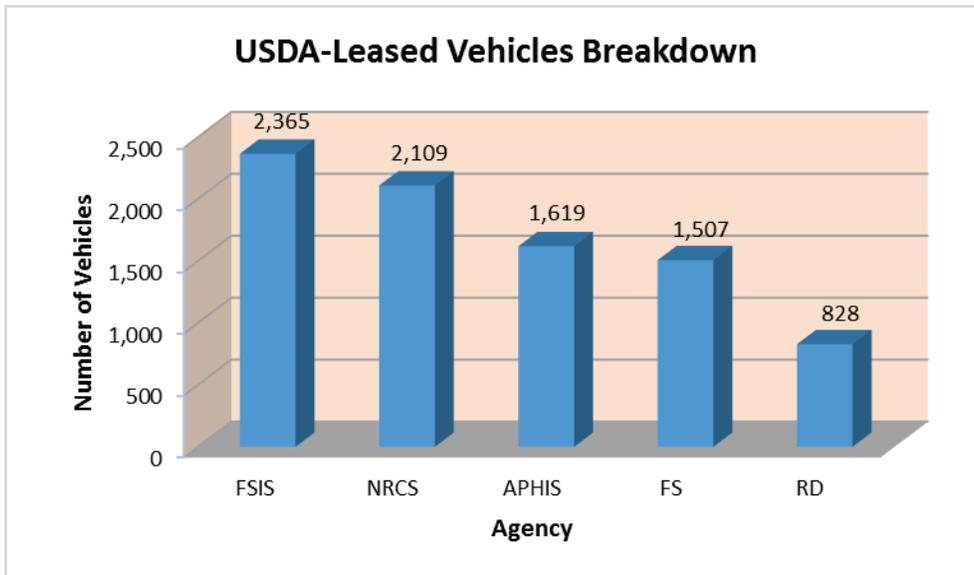


Figure 3: The breakdown of the top five agencies at USDA with the most leased vehicles.

GSA’s “How’s My Driving?” Program

OPFM’s responsibilities also include having a process to handle and resolve complaints of alleged vehicle misuse. As part of the effort to ensure the safe operation of Government vehicles, GSA developed the “How’s My Driving?” program. Through this program, GSA provides the public with a method to submit complaints of alleged vehicle misuse by Government employees by sending an e-mail to howsmydriving@gsa.gov.⁶ To report a

⁶ The public can also submit complaints by contacting the GSA fleet service representative or by directly calling GSA’s hotline. GSA officials ensure that complaints received via these two methods are collected by the “How’s My Driving?” program’s email system.

complaint, the public can send an email to GSA and provide information regarding the incident, including:

- the license plate;
- the date, time, and location of the alleged activity; and
- photographs, videos, and descriptions of the vehicle, the employee/driver, and passengers.

GSA has received complaints ranging from using a Government vehicle for completing personal errands to reports of speeding and reckless driving by employees. In the last 4 years, GSA has received a total of 184 complaints regarding the use of USDA Government vehicles by its employees: 62 complaints in 2015, 51 in 2016, 55 in 2017, and 16 as of March 2018. In addition, the public has submitted more complaints with included photographs or videos than in prior years.

Prior Work

In 2017, we reported that FSIS did not have a sufficient process in place to manage complaints of alleged employee vehicle misuse. Specifically, FSIS' procedures did not include instructions for its employee misconduct investigative unit to review GSA's publicly submitted complaints. We also reported that FSIS did not have an effective system for logging data pertaining to alleged vehicle misuse and that FSIS had not monitored its employees' qualifications and authorizations to operate a Government vehicle.⁷ FSIS agreed with, and reached management decision on, all the recommendations in our prior report.

Objective

During a prior audit, our initial evaluation of OPFM and USDA's overall complaint process regarding vehicle misuse indicated that OPFM needed to strengthen its policies and procedures related to USDA's fleet management. Therefore, we conducted additional work during this audit to finalize our analysis and issue OPFM-related findings and recommendations.

Our objective was to determine if OPFM effectively oversees USDA agencies and enforces controls to prevent and detect the misuse of Government vehicles by USDA employees. To accomplish our objective, we audited FS and APHIS. We also considered the findings and conclusions we made in the prior audit of FSIS during this audit.

⁷ USDA OIG, *Food Safety and Inspection Service's Process for Handling Vehicle Misuse Complaints* (50099-0002-21, Mar. 2017).

Finding 1: OPFM Did Not Adequately Oversee Vehicle Management of Agency Fleets

OPFM did not adequately oversee vehicle operations, related activities, and reporting requirements at USDA. Specifically, OPFM recorded inaccurate inventory data from FY 2016 to FY 2017, and in FY 2017 had submitted vehicle counts to GSA that exceeded actual inventory by almost 10,000 vehicles.⁸ Also, in a FY 2016 report to Congress, OPFM excluded more than 1,000 employees from their reported number of USDA employees who drive their Government vehicles from home to work. Lastly, OPFM had not taken effective actions to manage over 23,000 underutilized vehicles it had previously identified in a FY 2016 survey. This occurred because OPFM did not implement effective management controls to identify, collect, and analyze USDA fleet data. Consequently, USDA agencies did not provide OPFM sufficient information with which it could accurately report vehicle inventory and home-to-work usage determinations. Additionally, agencies did not provide to OPFM justifications for underutilized vehicles. As a result, USDA and its stakeholders, including Congress and GSA, were unable to make effective decisions or take appropriate actions. The USDA fleet costs about \$260 million annually to operate; if not managed effectively, the fleet could incur unnecessary costs.

Federal statute states that the head of each executive agency shall designate an office to establish and operate a central monitoring system for the agency's vehicle operations, related activities, and related reporting requirements.⁹ Per USDA's policy, OPFM is USDA's designated office responsible for vehicles and is required to consolidate and issue Department-wide reports and policy on all matters regarding vehicles.¹⁰

OPFM officials have not issued effective policies and procedures to ensure that USDA agencies implement controls to prevent and detect vehicle misuse. In August 2017, in response to a GAO audit, OPFM issued new policy on vehicle utilization to remind agencies of the minimum annual mileage or minimum days of use per year.¹¹ In addition, during our fieldwork, OPFM issued additional guidance to USDA agencies on how to use their fleet management information system. However, OPFM still needs to implement more effective management controls and update procedures related to vehicle inventory, home-to-work determinations, and vehicle utilization to help USDA agencies better manage their Government vehicles.

Inventory

USDA recorded inaccurate inventory data from FY 2016 to FY 2017, and in FY 2017, had submitted inventory counts to GSA that exceeded actual inventory by almost 10,000 vehicles. This occurred because OPFM had not implemented management controls to identify and accurately collect inventory data. Furthermore, FS was utilizing its own fleet management system, rather than USDA's, to track its vehicle operations and had not updated OPFM with accurate inventory counts. As a result, because USDA

⁸ Government agencies are required to report vehicle data to the Department of Energy (DOE), GSA, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

⁹ Pub. L. No. 107-217, sec. 1, tit. 40, subtit. I, chapter 175 (Aug. 21, 2002).

¹⁰ Agriculture Property Management Regulations Sub Chapter B-Personal Property (Oct. 2015).

¹¹ GAO-17-426, *Agencies Should Improve Processes to Identify Underutilized Vehicles* (Apr. 2017).

reported inaccurate information about its fleet size, USDA and its stakeholders were unable to evaluate the effectiveness of USDA's fleet management operations or take appropriate actions to minimize fleet expenses. USDA has not yet submitted revised reports to correct USDA's inaccurate inventory counts. However, OPFM has initiated these efforts and issued a new advisory to all USDA agencies.

Federal regulations require agencies to maintain a fleet management information system (fleet management system) to identify, collect, and analyze all costs involved in the operation of their owned and leased vehicles.¹² Accordingly, in 2012, USDA signed an agreement with GSA to designate GSA's FedFMS as the official Federal fleet management system. This agreement also allowed USDA to use GSA's acquisition system, "Fleet Drive-thru," to help agencies track costs associated with GSA-leased vehicles.¹³

We compared inventory counts from FS' and APHIS' national fleet managers and from OPFM officials,¹⁴ and determined that OPFM had reported to GSA almost 10,000 more vehicles than FS actually had. We determined that FS had used its own fleet management system, known as FS' Fleet Equipment Database (FED), and therefore had not updated FedFMS, the fleet management system that OPFM had used to develop the inventory reports sent to GSA.

According to an FS official, FS utilized FED because FedFMS did not interact with FS' financial system or support FS' heavy and specialized equipment. FS is the only agency within USDA that acquires and maintains its assets through a working capital fund, which according to FS officials, required FED to process and track the collection and expenditure of FS funds. As a result, FS did not manage or update FedFMS. Although OPFM officials were aware that FS was using FED, they believed that FS was still updating FedFMS. Consequently, OPFM used inaccurate data to evaluate the management of FS' fleet and inaccurately reported inventory to GSA, who publishes the Federal Fleet Report, an annual summary of Federal fleet statistics.

When we informed OPFM that FS had not maintained inventory data in FedFMS, OPFM immediately issued an advisory in March 2018 to remind all agencies that FedFMS is the official USDA fleet management system and that all official fleet reports would be developed based on information from FedFMS. We recommend that OPFM work with FS to identify a solution with the existing fleet management systems so that FS and OPFM are jointly able to fulfill USDA's missions and goals and meet Federal reporting requirements.

¹² Federal Management Regulations, Part 102-34, *Motor Vehicle Management*, 102-34.340 (Sept. 22, 2016).

¹³ GSA's Fleet Drive-thru application helps users report and track vehicle mileage, and generate vehicle usage reports for GSA-leased vehicles in their fleets. GSA's Fleet Drive-thru does not collect or manage information relating to agency-owned vehicles.

¹⁴ This count excludes law enforcement and international vehicles.

Underutilization

USDA did not take effective actions to manage over 23,000 underutilized vehicles identified in a FY 2016 survey. This occurred because OPFM did not implement controls that would require agencies to collect and report information about underutilized vehicles. Additionally, agencies did not provide OPFM with justifications for keeping low-mileage vehicles. Therefore, OPFM was unable to evaluate whether USDA agencies had effectively managed the size and use of their fleets. As a result, OPFM was unable to conserve any portion of the current \$260 million in operating expenses as it could not effectively identify areas where USDA's fleet could be reduced.

According to Departmental regulations, when a vehicle does not meet USDA's pre-established utilization threshold, agencies must either dispose of the vehicle or justify its continued use.¹⁵ Additionally, Federal regulations require OPFM to conduct a planning process using a vehicle allocation methodology, which helps agencies determine their optimal fleet inventory and determine the appropriate size, number, and types of vehicles.¹⁶ Ultimately, this process is essential for annual reporting requirements mandated by GSA, OMB, and DOE. In addition, this information also helps USDA plan, project, and forecast inventories and budgets.

In FY 2016, OPFM found that USDA agencies underutilized 23,828 vehicles. Of these, 5,127 vehicles had recorded 0 miles, and 18,701 vehicles did not meet USDA's utilization threshold.¹⁷ FS', APHIS', and FSIS' fleets accounted for 15,958 of the 23,828 total underutilized vehicles at USDA. According to OPFM officials, agencies did not provide OPFM with justifications for underutilized vehicles—justifications are required in order to retain low-mileage vehicles. Examples of justifiable low-mileage vehicles include vehicles used for emergencies, law enforcement, and unique tasks.¹⁸

In 2017, GAO reported that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had not annually assessed vehicle utilization or applied USDA criteria such as mileage or days used.¹⁹ As a result, GAO recommended that USDA communicate and redistribute USDA's policy on vehicle utilization to ensure fleet management staff were aware of USDA's policy. OPFM issued an advisory in August 2017 to improve the identification of underutilized vehicles.

OPFM identified underutilized vehicles and developed reports of low-mileage vehicles for USDA agencies. However, OPFM's advisory did not establish controls to ensure that USDA agencies timely submit justification waivers for underutilized vehicles. OPFM needs to establish annual deadlines, preferably prior to acquiring new or leased vehicles,

¹⁵ AGPMR Advisory No. 17-01 (Aug. 2017).

¹⁶ Federal Management Regulations, Part 102-34, *Motor Vehicle Management*, 102-34.50 (Sept. 22, 2016).

¹⁷ To be considered fully utilized, vehicles must meet criteria for either minimum mileage or days of use per year, but not necessarily both.

¹⁸ OPFM did not have any agency records of justifiable low-mileage vehicles and, therefore, we could not determine how many of FS, APHIS, and FSIS' underutilized vehicles were assigned to and used for emergencies, law enforcement, and unique tasks.

¹⁹ GAO-17-426, *Agencies Should Improve Processes to Identify Underutilized Vehicles* (Apr. 2017).

for agencies to submit justification waivers. In our view, this will help OPFM improve its process to dispose, share, or re-assign underutilized vehicles. OPFM officials agreed with our position.

Home-to-Work Authorizations

OPFM provided Congressional committees insufficient and inaccurate information about the number of employees who USDA approves to drive Government vehicles home. This occurred because OPFM did not implement management controls to identify, collect, and review home-to-work determinations. Furthermore, USDA agencies had not provided OPFM with home-to-work data needed to meet reporting requirements. If OPFM does not oversee agencies' application of the home-to-work policy, there is the increased risk that USDA employees may use Government vehicles for unofficial purposes.

Departmental policy states that OPFM will review home-to-work authorizations to determine if an authorization is adequately justified.²⁰ Furthermore, OPFM is responsible for ensuring that USDA agencies maintain logs or other records to verify that any home-to-work transportation was for official purposes. Lastly, Federal regulations state that OPFM must submit quarterly determinations to Congress providing the number of employees who are authorized or approved to drive or store their vehicles at home.²¹

We concluded that OPFM did not oversee USDA agencies' procedures to approve or maintain home-to-work authorizations. Instead, OPFM would occasionally receive counts from agencies describing the number of employees who were approved for home-to-work transportation. OPFM officials admitted that they had not regularly provided home-to-work data to Congress or met the quarterly reporting requirements. In February 2017, we asked OPFM to provide us with all home-to-work quarterly determinations sent to Congress since 2015. OPFM could only provide us with two quarterly reports between 2015 and February 2017. According to OPFM officials, they did not meet this reporting requirement because agencies had not provided the data needed.

Agencies are to maintain authorizations to establish that home-to-work transportation is for official purposes. Therefore, in September 2017, we requested logs or records of all home-to-work authorizations from FS and APHIS. FS national officials did not have these records easily accessible for our review and had difficulty obtaining this information from local officials. FS could not provide these home-to-work records until 30 days after our request. At the time of our request, the FS national fleet manager was unaware of how many FS employees were approved to drive from home to work. As a result of our audit, the FS national office conducted a data call to local officials and found that almost 1,000 additional FS employees were driving government vehicles from home to work. According to FS national officials, FS underreported the number of approved drivers because FS had excluded law enforcement employees, such as special agents,

²⁰ Departmental Regulation 5400-005, *Use of Government Vehicle for Home to Work* (Oct. 2009).

²¹ 41 C.F.R. 102-5.110 & 102-5.115, Sept. 2000.

from the count of drivers FS provided to OPFM. After our request and FS national office's data call to the local level, FS reported a 2,621 percent increase (from 41 to 1,116) in home-to-work drivers. Consequently, the following quarter, OPFM reported more than a 23 percent increase across USDA in drivers (4,394 to 5,422) approved to drive their vehicles from home to work.

Although USDA's policy states that OPFM should review agencies' home-to-work authorizations, USDA agencies did not report home-to-work activity to OPFM. Instead, USDA agencies attempted to maintain logs or other records to establish that employees performed home-to-work transportation for official purposes without OPFM's oversight. In our view, other USDA agencies could be operating similarly to FS, and a data call could identify even more USDA employees who drive their vehicles from home to work.

According to USDA's 2017 (4th Quarter) home-to-work report, approximately 5,422 employees at USDA are approved to drive or park their Government vehicle at their residences. It is our view that those employees who drive vehicles home are more likely to use their vehicles for unofficial purposes than those employees that do not hold a home-to-work authorization. Thus, the Department's level of risk could be much higher than OPFM officials originally expected due to underestimating the number of home-to-work drivers. Consequently, OPFM should issue procedures to collect and review approved home-to-work authorizations to minimize that risk.

OPFM is responsible for USDA vehicle operations, including oversight of inventory, underutilized vehicles, and review of home-to-work authorizations. Furthermore, USDA and its stakeholders rely on the information that OPFM produces to properly assess risks, minimize fleet expenses, and evaluate the effectiveness of fleet management operations. Therefore, the information OPFM supplies should be accurate, reliable, and timely. OPFM agreed with our findings, has begun developing new policy, and is updating procedures to address the findings in our audit.

Recommendation 1

OPFM should implement timeframes and require all USDA agencies to annually justify or dispose, share, or re-assign underutilized vehicles as defined by the criteria set forth in AGPMR Advisory 17-01.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will implement timeframes and conduct annual utilization reviews of agency fleets. The estimated completion date is the beginning of FY19.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation. Subsequent to the agency response, an OPFM official informed us that the estimated completion date was September 30, 2019.

Recommendation 2

OPFM should reconcile vehicle inventory counts on an annual basis with all USDA agencies, but specifically with any agencies, such as FS, that may continue to use their own vehicle management information systems to record inventory, cost, and operational data.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will annually conduct an in-depth vehicle-level data validation to reconcile inventory counts. The estimated completion date is December 31, 2018. OPFM will also work with Forest Service to interface the Forest Service Fleet Equipment Database (FED) with USDA's official fleet management information system. The estimated completion date is June 30, 2018.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation. Subsequent to the agency response, an OPFM official informed us that the estimated completion date was June 30, 2019.

Recommendation 3

OPFM should immediately conduct a data call to all USDA agencies, request all active, certified home-to-work authorizations, and immediately update the quarterly home-to-work determinations sent to Congress.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. On July 11, 2018, OPFM conducted a data call to all USDA agencies and requested all active, certified home-to-work authorizations. The second quarter FY18 report was sent to Congress on July 18, 2018.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

OPFM should identify a tool (such as SharePoint) to collect and review home-to-work authorization forms so that OPFM can periodically review eligibility for more accurate reporting to satisfy quarterly Congressional home-to-work reporting requirements.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will implement a tool that will populate a database of home-to-work authorization forms. The estimated completion date is June 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Finding 2: Complaints by the Public of USDA Employees Misusing Government Vehicles Not Properly Investigated

The USDA agencies we audited had not properly investigated complaints of employee misuse of Government vehicles and, in some instances, had not recorded information that would help determine if complaints should be investigated further. This occurred because OPFM did not send complaints to an independent employee misconduct investigative unit (IU) and did not provide clear guidance on what records to maintain relating to allegations. As a result, we question whether agency officials always took appropriate action to address complaints. Consequently, some employees continued to operate Government vehicles even though they were involved in incidents that, in our view, should have resulted in the suspension or revocation of their driving privileges.

Federal agencies are required to establish procedures to ensure Government vehicles are used safely and appropriately.²² Within USDA, OPFM is responsible for providing oversight of USDA's fleet and handling complaints of alleged vehicle misuse.²³ According to USDA guidance, each agency's designated IU must investigate employees' possible misuse of Government vehicles and maintain records of any evidence obtained.²⁴ If allegations of willful vehicle misuse are substantiated, agencies must suspend the employee for at least 1 month after a first offense and remove the employee from the agency after a second offense.²⁵ According to Federal guidance, under certain circumstances, agencies can suspend an employee without pay for a longer period or terminate their employment.²⁶

Reports of USDA vehicle misuse can come in through three routes: (1) through a USDA employee, supervisor, or a hotline, (2) complaints to USDA OIG's Office of Investigations, or (3) GSA's "How's My Driving?" program—which is the source of most complaints, according to OPFM and agency records. To report Government vehicle misuse, the public can email GSA (howsmydriving@gsa.gov) with information regarding the incident, including:

- the license plate;
- the date, time, and location of the alleged activity; and
- photographs, videos, and descriptions of the vehicle, the employee/driver, and passengers, if applicable.²⁷

GSA has received complaints including reports of employees using a Government vehicle for personal use, speeding, and driving recklessly.²⁸ Between January 2015 and March 2018, the

²² Pub. L. No. 107-217, sec. 1, tit. 40, subtit. I, chapter 5, subchapter VI, § 601 (Aug. 21, 2002).

²³ Agriculture Property Management Regulations Sub Chapter B- Personal Property, 110-34.5a.

²⁴ USDA, *Agency Investigations of Employee Misconduct*, Chapter 751, Subchapter 3 (Nov. 17, 1981).

²⁵ USDA, *Department Personnel Manual*, Appendix A-USDA Guide for Disciplinary Penalties (June 29, 1994).

²⁶ 31 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 1349 (Sept. 13, 1982).

²⁷ As part of the "How's My Driving?" program, the public can also submit complaints by contacting the GSA fleet service representative or by directly calling GSA's Hotline. GSA officials also ensure that complaints received in these ways are included in the program's email system.

²⁸ OPFM provided all complaints of alleged USDA vehicle misuse submitted by the public between January 2015 and March 2018.

public submitted 184 complaints to GSA concerning USDA vehicles.²⁹ APHIS, FS, and FSIS accounted for 143 of these complaints—approximately 75 percent. Due to technological advances, like GSA’s program and the widespread use of mobile devices to document incidents, we expect the number of complaints to grow and to include more evidence such as photographs and videos to support allegations.

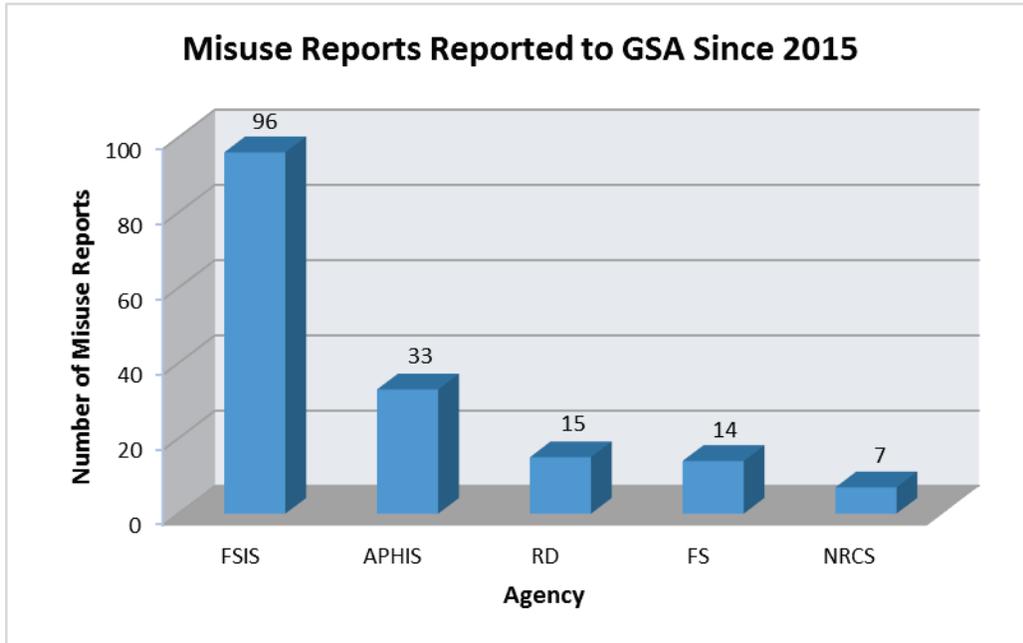


Figure 4: Breakdown of all vehicle misuse complaints logged by OPFM.

We reviewed 33 complaints pertaining to FS and APHIS vehicles that were reported through GSA’s “How’s My Driving?” program and determined that (1) complaints were forwarded to supervisors, not IUs, for review, who inconsistently resolved allegations, and (2) relevant complaint data, such as employees’ names and driving histories, were not properly logged in FS’ and APHIS’ systems of record.

OPFM Did Not Require IUs to Assess Complaints Submitted to GSA

We determined that complaints reported directly to USDA OIG’s Office of Investigations or by a USDA employee or supervisor were assessed by each agency’s IU, as required. However, the 33 complaints from GSA that we reviewed were directed only to the employee’s supervisor for resolution—not to the agencies’ IUs as well. This is consistent with our findings in a prior audit, which determined that FSIS also had not initially referred publicly-submitted complaints to its IU.³⁰

²⁹ GSA received a total 192 complaints concerning USDA vehicles. However, after cross-referencing license tag identification numbers, OPFM determined that eight complaints reported vehicles that did not belong to USDA.

³⁰ Of the 43 complaints we reviewed, FSIS officials had referred 3 complaints to their employee misconduct investigative unit.

OPFM did not have a formalized and standardized process for reviewing complaints. When OPFM received complaints from GSA's "How's My Driving?" program, OPFM officials identified the agency to which each vehicle belonged by using the license tag included in the complaint. Once the agency was identified, OPFM forwarded the complaint to the agency's national fleet manager, who then forwarded the complaint to the accused employee's supervisor to determine what actions to take to address the complaint of alleged vehicle misuse. OPFM's practice bypassed the IU review, which is required by Departmental guidance.

Departmental regulations require USDA agencies to have an IU that is authorized and trained to investigate possible employee misconduct.^{31, 32} IUs have access to information not always available to supervisors, such as employees' prior disciplinary actions and relevant personnel records. Additionally, because each agency has a designated IU, referring all instances of alleged driver misconduct to the IU, as well as the fleet manager, would ensure that employees are treated equally by an unbiased third party (rather than an immediate supervisor) and that disciplinary actions, if any, are consistent throughout the agency. This would eliminate the risk of supervisor bias either for or against some employees and ensure a greater level of objectivity when assessing complaints.

Instead, however, we determined that supervisors were hesitant to take the required disciplinary action even when complaints were substantiated, applied disciplinary actions inconsistently, and did very little to evaluate the merits of the complaint.

For example, one complainant submitted a complaint through GSA's "How's My Driving?" program with a photo displaying a mattress on top of a USDA jeep that was parked next to a moving truck. The complainant alleged that a USDA employee was using this Government vehicle for personal use to help move or transport furniture.

OPFM forwarded this complaint and the photo to the agency fleet manager, who then forwarded it to the identified employee's supervisor to resolve. Even though the employee admitted that the vehicle was checked out that day to help students move out of their apartment (a nongovernment-related act), the supervisor verbally counseled the employee and no further action was taken by the agency. An FS assistant director acknowledged that the photograph negatively portrayed USDA, and demonstrated unofficial use of a Government vehicle. According to the Department's regulations, the employee should have been suspended for a minimum of 1 month, but was not. OPFM officials were surprised that FS did not take stronger measures to discipline the employee.

³¹ Agencies are authorized to conduct investigations of any possible employee misconduct involving violations of rules, regulations, or law. This includes: (1) vehicle misuse, (2) absence without leave and attendance irregularities, (3) conducting personal business during duty hours, (4) sexual harassment, (5) intoxication while on duty, and (6) other misconduct.

³² USDA, *Agency Investigations of Employee Misconduct*, Chapter 751, Subchapter 3 (Nov. 17, 1981).

Another complainant submitted a photo through GSA's "How's My Driving?" program that displayed a Government vehicle towing a recreational boat. The complainant alleged that a Government driver was recklessly driving over the weekend while towing a personal fishing boat.

As in the prior example, even though the employee admitted to using a Government vehicle to move his personal boat and trailer (a nongovernment-related act), the supervisor gave a verbal reprimand, instructed the employee to take additional driver training, and issued a letter of caution, which, according to agency officials, was forwarded to employee relations. A program deputy administrator determined that these actions were satisfactory for a "career employee of 25 years." However, because this was admittedly an unofficial use of a Government vehicle, the employee should have received at least a 1-month suspension without pay.

We also determined that supervisors across each agency inconsistently resolved similar complaints and were generally not in compliance with Departmental regulations when determining what disciplinary actions to take. Of the 33 complaints in our sample, 24 complaints involved reckless driving.³³ Supervisors resolved complaints involving reckless driving by taking different actions, which included: (1) providing verbal counsel or reprimand, (2) issuing a letter of instruction or reprimand, (3) requiring additional training, and (4) taking no action.

For example, one complainant alleged that an FS employee was speeding and driving closely behind them. However, because the employee claimed to have no recollection of the incident, the supervisor took no further action against the employee. A similar complaint alleged that an FS employee was following closely behind the complainant and then sped past the complainant illegally. The FS employee then allegedly ran a stop sign. According to the supervisor, the employee received a letter of reprimand, a formal warning that stated that a second offense could lead to more severe disciplinary action. This letter was placed in the employee's official personnel folder. Although both FS employees were accused of reckless driving, only one FS employee's record will show evidence of employee misconduct.

In another example, one complaint alleged that an APHIS employee was excessively speeding for a long distance. In response to the allegation, the supervisor issued an official letter of instruction that reminded the employee to obey all traffic laws and convey a professional image. Another complainant alleged that an APHIS employee was excessively speeding, tailgating, and passing aggressively. In response to the allegation, the employee was verbally reminded about safe driving and the supervisor was advised to observe the employee's driving practices. Again, despite both employees facing similar allegations, only one employee's personnel file will have a record of employee misconduct.

³³ Reckless driving includes speeding, tailgating, or driving erratically.

Because agency IUs are authorized and trained to investigate employee misconduct, we believe an IU review of vehicle misuse complaints would result in more thorough, objective, appropriate, and consistent corrective actions. Without revisions to OPFM's complaint resolution process, there is a possibility that supervisors will not take the required corrective actions and will inconsistently resolve similar complaints of alleged vehicle misuse.

While it is our view that OPFM should require IUs to review accusations of improper vehicle use, it is important that OPFM also notify the responsible agency officials. Agency fleet managers are responsible for managing and directing their vehicles in accordance with laws and regulations. Supervisors should be aware of their employees' alleged vehicle misuse or any potential employee misconduct, as this falls within the scope of supervisor responsibilities.

While IUs should initially review all complaints of Government vehicle misuse, IUs may determine that their expertise is not required to investigate and resolve less complex complaints. In such cases, IUs may notify the responsible agency officials to contact the employee's supervisor to determine what actions to take to address the complaint. In order to improve consistency with supervisory actions, OPFM needs to develop specific procedures for supervisors to follow when taking actions to resolve complaints referred by the IU. OPFM officials, as well as APHIS and FS officials, agreed with our position on this issue.

Additionally, we noted that some agencies may need to coordinate with OPFM to clearly designate an investigative unit within their agency to handle allegations of Government vehicle misuse. For example, when we spoke with FS officials, we noted that some FS officials were unclear whether these complaints should be handled by the Office of Employee Relations, which handles hotline complaints, or by FS Law Enforcement and Investigations, which investigates complaints of a criminal nature. Going forward, OPFM should ensure that each agency has a clearly designated IU to investigate employee vehicle misuse and clearly established procedures to internally resolve such complaints.

USDA Agencies Did Not Effectively Log Complaint Data

We also discovered that agencies did not consistently track employee information in their complaint logs, including:

- employees' names;
- time and attendance records;
- driving histories (including prior accidents, which employees are required to report); and
- prior disciplinary actions.

Specifically, we determined that FS did not log any complaint information or evidence unless it resulted in a disciplinary action. This is not consistent with USDA guidance, which states that each agency must maintain records of any evidence obtained.³⁴ Additionally, although APHIS officials logged some complaint data into the agency's Labor and Employee Relations Information System (LERIS), they could have made better use of this system in order to link relevant information to complaint records. This information could help agencies determine (1) whether a complaint should be investigated further, (2) risk factors such as employees with multiple complaints, and (3) what, if any, disciplinary action should occur.

For example, an employee's time and attendance records can be referenced and compared against the time and location of a reported incident to determine whether vehicle misuse could have occurred. We identified five complaints with dates and times of alleged misuse that had occurred on weekends or holidays, which required further investigation to determine if the employee was on duty at the time of the alleged misuse. According to complaint records we reviewed, agencies did not obtain detailed time and attendance information for the employees in the complaint log.³⁵

Additionally, although FS and APHIS addressed substantiated claims of vehicle misuse, neither agency tracks the individual involved in each complaint; as a result, agencies cannot always identify employees with multiple complaints. By carefully reviewing e-mail correspondence, we were able to identify that one APHIS employee was accused of multiple violations. However, because APHIS did not track data such as employee names, APHIS officials at the national office were unaware that the multiple complaints pertained to the same individual. We identified similar issues in our prior audit of FSIS.³⁶

We also identified that agencies did not track employee driving history or multiple accidents when employees self-reported this information on their driving authorizations or other relevant forms. Therefore, agencies did not consider the employee's driving history and prior accidents when investigating complaints of vehicle misuse and determining corrective actions. Tracking this information is crucial, particularly since we identified that 22 of 80 FS and APHIS employees self-reported one or more accidents on their personal or Government driving record (see Finding 3). Determining employees

³⁴ USDA, *Agency Investigations of Employee Misconduct*, Chapter 751, Subchapter 3 (Nov.17, 1981).

³⁵ We did not request time and attendance records from each agencies' human resources division for the employees that were included in our sample because of the extensive length of time it would have taken to compile the information. We did not need to collect this information to fulfill our audit objective.

³⁶ In our prior audit of FSIS, we reviewed 43 complaints submitted by the public. The audit disclosed: (1) employees in 2 complaints that had some type of prior disciplinary action or adverse action issued against them, (2) 4 employees with a prior alleged offense of vehicle misuse, (3) employees in 5 complaints that were not on-duty at the time of alleged misuse, and (4) employees in 12 complaints that disclosed one or more accidents on their personal or government driving record. In this audit, we did not find any employees with a prior disciplinary action for employee misconduct in their employee records because we did not contact each agency's employee relations division to obtain these types of personnel records from FS due to the extensive length of time it would have taken to collect this information. We did not need to collect this information to fulfill our audit objective.

with multiple accidents could help supervisors determine appropriate corrective actions to take and mitigate risk in the future.

We determined that agencies did not track this information because OPFM has not established clear guidance on what information to maintain in agency logs. When we spoke to agency officials, they said they were not aware that they were required to log and maintain such information. These officials agreed that consistently logging complaint data would help improve the complaint resolution process and provide decision makers with necessary information. By keeping a detailed log of complaint information, agencies can identify individuals with questionable trends, driving histories, or multiple complaints or accidents who therefore pose a greater threat to USDA's driving operations.

Misuse of Government vehicles is a serious offense with potentially dangerous and detrimental consequences to public safety and Government resources. Federal regulations and Departmental guidance have directed that employees will be suspended for 1 month the first time they misuse a Government vehicle and will be removed from the agency after a second offense. To match the seriousness of the penalties for vehicle misuse, OPFM needs to establish preventative measures to keep vehicle misuse from occurring as well as clear procedures to address violations when they do occur.

Overall, OPFM needs to ensure that each agency is properly, objectively, and consistently handling vehicle misuse complaints submitted by the public. OPFM can accomplish this by sending complaints to each agency's IU and fleet manager. Each agency's IU should then assess the allegations to determine if the complaint should be further investigated by their unit or handled by a supervisor. OPFM also needs to provide supervisors with guidance to consistently resolve public complaints. Finally, OPFM should ensure that decision makers, such as IUs and supervisors, are equipped with the information they need to identify risks—such as drivers with multiple complaints or questionable driving histories. These improvements should prevent poor drivers from operating vehicles, ultimately reducing the risk of accidents, property damage, costly repairs, and danger to the public.

Recommendation 5

OPFM should coordinate with each USDA agency to identify an employee misconduct investigative unit, and route all complaints of employee vehicle misuse to that unit for assessment.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will identify an investigative unit at each agency and will route all complaints of employee vehicle misuse to that unit. The estimated completion date is December 31, 2018.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Recommendation 6

OPFM should require each agency's employee misconduct investigative unit to assess misuse allegations submitted by the public. The assessment should include identifying risk factors, such as repeat offenders, employee time and attendance records, questionable driving histories, and prior disciplinary actions, and conclude whether the employee misconduct investigative unit should further investigate the complaint or allow the agency to process it.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will develop and implement directions for agencies to follow when assessing misuse allegations submitted by the public. The estimated completion date is September 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Recommendation 7

OPFM should develop procedures for agencies to follow when investigating complaints referred to them by their perspective employee misconduct investigative units. Guidance should include, at a minimum: (1) expected timeframes to address and resolve the complaints, (2) recommended courses of action for each complaint type, and (3) documentation to provide to OPFM supporting that corrective actions adequately address the complaints.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will develop guidance for agencies to follow when investigating complaints referred to them by their perspective employee misconduct investigative units. The estimated completion date is September 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Recommendation 8

OPFM should develop procedures for OPFM personnel to follow when receiving, recording, distributing, and resolving complaints received from the public. This guidance, at a minimum, should include: (1) information to be recorded by OPFM personnel, (2) expected timeframes for agencies to address and resolve complaints once the investigating body is determined, (3) documentation necessary to obtain during the complaint process, and (4) closeout procedures once a complaint has been resolved.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will draft guidance for OPFM staff to follow when recording and tracking vehicle misuse complaints. The estimated completion date is September 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Recommendation 9

OPFM should require each agency to log and track relevant data (such as employee name, time and attendance records, accident history, repeat allegations, and prior disciplinary actions) to help the employee misconduct investigative unit select complaints for further investigation.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will draft guidance for agencies to log and track relevant data for investigative units to use when determining whether complaints merit further investigation. The estimated completion date is September 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Finding 3: USDA Employees Did Not Have Sufficient Documentation to Support They Had Met Departmental and Federal Authorization and Qualification Requirements

FS and APHIS employees operated Government vehicles without sufficient documentation to support that they had met Departmental and Federal authorization and qualification requirements. Further, FS and APHIS fleet managers, as well as FSIS fleet management, which we audited recently, did not maintain records to ensure that their employees were qualified to operate Government vehicles (for example, possession of a valid State driver's license). This occurred because of procedural weaknesses at both the agency and Departmental level. First, agencies did not ensure that employees' authorizations and qualifications were supported and up to date. Second, OPFM, which is responsible for overseeing USDA vehicle operations, relied on agencies to maintain these records without establishing procedures for agencies to follow to ensure drivers met authorization and qualification requirements. It is crucial that agency officials have current, reliable information when determining if a USDA employee is qualified to operate a Government vehicle. Employees operating Government vehicles without proper authorization or qualifications increase the risk of a serious accident—including injury or death, damage to property, repair costs, and loss of public trust.

Federal regulations state that agencies must establish an efficient and effective system to identify employees who are authorized and qualified to operate Government vehicles and periodically review their qualifications.³⁷ A USDA agency will generally use an authorization-to-operate form (authorization) to document that the employee meets the minimum requirements to operate a Government-owned or Government-leased vehicle. These requirements include having an approved authorization, safe driving record, valid driver's license, and meeting additional agency requirements, such as training.³⁸ Additionally, at least once every 4 years, each agency should review and renew each employee's authorization to ensure the employee still meets the minimum requirements.³⁹ Therefore, agencies must maintain these forms or similar documentation to support that their employees are authorized and qualified to operate a Government vehicle.

However, we concluded that, overall, agency records did not support that employees were authorized, qualified, or trained to operate a Government vehicle. This occurred because neither OPFM nor agencies established an effective system to monitor and document employees' authorizations and qualifications. Instead, supervisors relied on employees to update their own records and did not always routinely manage or review them. As a result, agency supervisors could be making determinations about an employee's qualifications to operate a Government vehicle without knowing if employees possessed valid driver's licenses, had clean driving histories, or took the required training courses.

³⁷ 5 C.F.R. § 930.104.

³⁸ 5 C.F.R. § 930.105.

³⁹ 5 C.F.R. § 930.109.

We requested key agency documentation to support that each of the 80 employees we selected were authorized, qualified, and trained to operate a Government vehicle. This documentation included:

- the authorization-to-operate form (authorization),
- valid driver's license,
- driving history (and any other documentation supporting authorization and qualification), and
- evidence of all driver's training.

Authorizations

We determined that, of the 80 employee authorizations we requested, 30 authorizations were either not included in the file or were outdated.⁴⁰ Specifically, 27 employees did not have an authorization on file.⁴¹ Agency officials were unable to provide a reason for why these records could not be located. Additionally, although supervisors should renew their employees' authorizations every 4 years, three employees had outdated authorizations. For instance, one FS employee's authorization was last renewed almost 10 years ago. A second FS employee's authorization was renewed 7 years ago.

Although the authorizations for the remaining 50 employees were renewed within the past 4 years, 26 of these were incomplete and were either missing form content or the approving signature of an operator, supervisor, or examiner.⁴² For example, we discovered that one APHIS program office used an authorization form without a field for an employee signature, which differed from any other authorization form we reviewed in this or our prior audit. Much of the information provided on the authorization, such as traffic violations, accident history, and the status of an employee's driver's license, is left to the employee to disclose and for supervisors to verify. Without properly completing or signing an authorization or similar documentation, agencies cannot hold the driver or supervisor responsible for information on the document.

Agency officials could not explain why supervisors did not maintain these driving authorizations in the employee records. The agency fleet managers were also unaware that this information was not stored or maintained at the local level. OPFM can strengthen the maintenance of this critical information by issuing Department-wide policy related to maintaining proper documentation of authorizations. Additionally, OPFM should ensure that agencies obtain employee certifications on authorization forms.

⁴⁰ Of the 30 employees with outdated or missing authorizations, 28 were FS employees and 2 were APHIS employees.

⁴¹ Of the 27 employees with missing authorizations, 25 were FS employees and 2 were APHIS employees.

⁴² Of the 26 employees with incomplete authorizations, 21 were APHIS employees and 5 were FS employees.

Driver's Licenses

We also identified 27 employees whose records did not include documentation to support evidence of a valid driver's license. In these instances, we concluded that a supervisor had not verified that the employee had a valid driver's license to operate a Government vehicle. In addition, because authorizations and other records were not reviewed and renewed frequently enough, we identified five employees whose authorizations revealed that their driver's licenses had expired since they were last reviewed by their supervisors. Agencies left it up to the employees to update their authorizations when they needed to renew their driver's license. For example, one FS employee's driver's license had expired in 2012, according to their authorization. The FS employee last filled out the authorization in 2008, and there was no supervisory signature. After our visit, we determined that this employee had renewed his or her driver's license, but had not reported the renewal. Supervisors should actively verify that employees have current driver's licenses, rather than rely solely on the employee to do so.

To resolve this issue, some USDA agencies kept a photocopy of the employee's driver's license on file. An APHIS official noted that a photocopy would ensure that the supervisor had actually verified the validity and the expiration date of the driver's license. We agreed with the APHIS official's reasoning and recommend that, at a minimum, supervisors should ensure that evidence of a current and valid driver's license is documented on the authorization, and that the authorization is maintained in the employee's records. To monitor the status of employees' driver's licenses better and not to be dependent on employees to disclose changes in their driving history, supervisors should review this authorization at least once a year.

Agency officials did not always track when an employee's driver's license was expired. Instead, it was left to employees to notify their supervisor when they renew their driver's license. However, because this information is not closely monitored, there is the risk that an employee could operate a Government vehicle without a current or valid driver's license. OPFM can issue Department-wide policy to improve adequate verification of employees' driver's licenses and increase the consistency in the manner in which supervisors perform this verification.

Driving Histories

We reviewed the driving history for the drivers in our sample based on the information provided on the authorization and accident reports from employees.⁴³ Generally, drivers are required to report accidents or traffic violations that occurred within the last 5 years on their authorization forms. Of the 80 drivers in our sample, 22 drivers listed one or more accidents on their personal or Government driving record within the last 5 years.⁴⁴ Seven drivers were involved in two accidents, and one employee was involved in three.⁴⁵

⁴³ Standard Form-91, *Motor Vehicle Accident Report* (Feb. 2004).

⁴⁴ Of the 22 drivers with one or more accidents, 16 were APHIS employees and 6 were FS employees.

⁴⁵ Of the 7 drivers with two accidents, 5 were APHIS employees and 2 were FS employees. The driver with 3 accidents was an APHIS employee.

Types of accidents the employees reported included:

- hitting a car after running a stop sign,
- hitting a car when a driver had “blacked out” because they were feeling dizzy while driving, and
- minor incidents, such as backing into an object and causing damage to the Government vehicle.

For supervisors to evaluate their employees’ driving history, the authorization requires that employees disclose any traffic violations. However, we determined that supervisors did not always evaluate this information on the authorization. Multiple traffic violations could prevent employees from being qualified to operate a Government vehicle.

For example, one FS employee reported having received a speeding ticket in 2013 while operating his or her personal vehicle. This same employee also reported a restriction placed on his or her driver’s license by the State of Michigan for a 5-month period in 2017. The restriction only allowed the employee to travel to and from their residence and employment, during employment, and for other very specific purposes. We discovered that, as of October 2017, the supervisor had not yet verified that the driver had renewed his or her driver’s license, which had expired in March 2017. This employee had operated a Government vehicle while this restriction was in effect and should, at a minimum, have been closely monitored. However, there was no evidence in the employee’s records to support that a supervisor had discussed the speeding violation, followed up on the restriction, or reviewed the employee’s authorization.

In our view, frequent accidents or multiple traffic violations is relevant information in an employee’s driving history that supervisors should closely and frequently monitor. OPFM should issue Department-wide policy to ensure that the employee’s driving history is properly reviewed prior to authorizing an employee to operate a Government vehicle.

Driver’s Training

We reviewed OPFM’s policies and procedures and determined that OPFM did not require agencies and their drivers to take any type of driving-related training. Instead, agencies set their own training requirements. Generally, agencies required drivers to complete one training course, “Defensive Driver Training,” every 3 years, which could usually be completed online. However, of the 80 drivers in our sample, 26 drivers had not completed the required training within the last 3 years.⁴⁶

This occurred because OPFM and the agencies do not have a sufficient record system to ensure that employees receive necessary training. As the agency responsible for the oversight of vehicles, OPFM should establish mandatory training for drivers across the

⁴⁶ All 26 drivers who had not completed the required training were FS employees.

Department. While OPFM has expressed interest in requiring USDA’s fleet card training, it should also require a safety training course for USDA drivers, such as the training that some agencies already require.⁴⁷

Prior FSIS Audit

In our prior audit, we similarly determined that FSIS records did not support that its employees were authorized, qualified, or trained to operate a Government vehicle.⁴⁸ To address these issues, we recommended that FSIS develop and implement procedures to periodically review documentation authorizing employees to drive Government vehicles. FSIS responded that it would create a master system of record, and periodically review authorizations, driver’s licenses, driving history, and qualifications and training to ensure employees are properly authorized. Due to the results of our FSIS, APHIS, and FS audits, it is our view that the 4-year requirement to review driver qualifications and authorizations is insufficient. OPFM needs to issue Department-wide policy and require that agencies annually review employee records that authorize employees to drive Government vehicles.

Employees operating Government vehicles without proper authorization or qualifications increase the risk that an employee may be involved in a serious accident. This, in turn, can increase the risk of injury or death, damage to property, repair costs, and the loss of public trust. For example, FS drivers were involved in 4,742 accidents in a 3-year period (calendar year (CY) 2015 through 2017), which cost nearly \$2.1 million in damages. The number of accidents at FS, FSIS, and APHIS and the costs associated with those accidents are shown in Figure 5.

Agency	Time Frame	Accidents	Repair Costs
FS	CY15–CY17	4742	\$2,076,836.00
FSIS	FY15–July 2016	569	\$1,763,282.88
APHIS	FY15–FY17	670	\$393,780.91

Figure 5: Breakdown of accidents and repair costs at FS, FSIS, and APHIS by Fiscal Year (FY) or Calendar Year (CY) timeframe

OPFM and supervisors are all responsible for the safety of their fleet operations and should take preventative measures to minimize these risks. However, the agencies we audited—which make up more than 60 percent of USDA’s fleet—did not have effective systems to monitor employees’ authorizations and qualifications. We therefore recommend that OPFM ensure that all agencies have a system to maintain accurate and updated information to support employees’ authorizations and qualifications to operate a Government vehicle. As part of this system,

⁴⁷ USDA Fleet Card User training covers the authorized and unauthorized use of the USDA fleet card. In addition, during this training the user certifies that they understand the Department’s fleet policy and the official use of Government vehicles.

⁴⁸ For FSIS, we identified 16 instances of FSIS employees with outdated authorizations to operate a vehicle, 15 instances of FSIS employees with expired driver’s licenses (according to the authorization), 12 employees who disclosed one or more accidents on their personal or Government driving record, and 7 instances of FSIS employees who did not complete required training.

OPFM should require that, every year, USDA agencies review employees' authorizations and qualifications and certify that employees meet the minimum requirements to operate a Government vehicle. Within a year, driver licenses can expire and employee driving history, including accidents and traffic violations, can also considerably change; therefore, USDA should make decisions regarding its fleet based on the latest information. Lastly, at its discretion, OPFM should periodically review these authorizations. When we met with OPFM, FS, and APHIS in March 2018, they agreed with our preliminary conclusions and our proposed actions.

Recommendation 10

OPFM should develop and implement procedures for all USDA agencies to consistently review driver authorizations and qualifications. Specifically, these procedures should require agencies to annually review employee records and annually certify that employees have: (1) authorization to operate a vehicle, (2) a valid driver's license, (3) an acceptable driving history, (4) met training requirements, and (5) certified their authorization forms.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation. OPFM will develop a certification process to ensure drivers have a valid license, acceptable driving history, driver training, and have appropriate authorizations to operate a government vehicle. The estimated completion date is June 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Recommendation 11

OPFM should require all USDA agencies to update their policies and establish an effective monitoring system to ensure that procedures described in Recommendation 10 are followed.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation and agreed to take action. The estimated completion date is June 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Recommendation 12

OPFM should establish procedures to monitor and periodically review, at its discretion, agency certifications described in Recommendation 10.

Agency Response

In its August 29, 2018, response, OPFM concurred with this recommendation and agreed to take action. OPFM noted that funding availability may impact the ability of OPFM to provide oversight. The estimated completion date is June 30, 2019.

OIG Position

We accept management decision for this recommendation.

Scope and Methodology

The objective of the audit was to determine if OPFM effectively oversees USDA agencies and enforces controls to prevent and detect the misuse of Government vehicles by USDA employees. We conducted our audit work by meeting with OPFM officials in Washington, D.C.; APHIS officials in Riverdale, Maryland; Austin, Texas; and Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and FS officials in Placerville, California; Washington, D.C.; and Wenatchee, Washington.⁴⁹

We reviewed Department-wide and agency-specific policies and procedures related to alleged vehicle misuse, complaints of alleged vehicle misuse, vehicle use, fleet inventory, authorizations for use of Government vehicles, and employees' records. We performed our fieldwork from February 2017 to July 2018.

According to data provided by OPFM, FS had the most USDA-owned vehicles (17,674 of 30,872). In addition, APHIS ranked in the top five USDA agencies for owned vehicles (2,922 of 30,872) as well as leased vehicles (1,619 of 9,971). Combined, FS and APHIS represent approximately 58 percent of USDA's fleet (23,750 of 40,876).⁵⁰ Therefore, we reviewed fleet operations at APHIS and FS to evaluate OPFM's management over the misuse of Government vehicles.

In April 2017, we requested information to obtain a sample of APHIS and FS drivers to review documentation in the following areas:

- authorization-to-operate
- home-to-work authorizations
- training records
- mileage logs

In order to accomplish this review, we requested a list of authorized drivers from FS and APHIS. In response to this request, FS officials provided us with a list of all FS employees. However, this list did not provide us with sufficient data to establish which employees had driven a Government vehicle during the scope of our audit. APHIS officials provided us with a list of Wright Express or WEX Inc. (WEX) fleet card transactions during a span of 3 months.⁵¹ This list also did not provide us with sufficient data to establish which employees were actually authorized to drive Government vehicles during the scope of our audit.

Therefore, we requested an inventory of all active vehicles owned and leased by FS and APHIS as of July 20, 2017, excluding law enforcement vehicles and international vehicles. To verify that FS and APHIS data were accurate, we then requested that OPFM provide us with their records of FS and APHIS vehicle inventory, excluding law enforcement vehicles and

⁴⁹ For our prior audit, we met with FSIS officials in Beltsville, Maryland, and OPFM and GSA officials in Washington, D.C.

⁵⁰ FSIS had the most leased vehicles at USDA (2,365 of 9,971).

⁵¹ Each of USDA's leased and loaned vehicles has a WEX fleet card, which is used to pay for expenditures such as gas, repairs, and roadside assistance.

international vehicles. Upon receiving the vehicle inventory from FS, APHIS, and OPFM, we attempted to reconcile the sets of data but were unable to do so.

Therefore, we non-statistically selected 40 APHIS vehicles and 40 FS vehicles to identify 80 drivers of these vehicles. For APHIS, we selected the vehicles based on the States with the highest number of owned and GSA-leased vehicles.⁵² For FS, we selected the vehicles based on the regions with the highest number of owned and GSA-leased vehicles.⁵³ For the 80 total drivers identified in our sample, we obtained:

- mileage logs showing that the employee operated the vehicle as of July 20, 2017;
- authorizations and accompanying documentation (when applicable) to show that the employee was qualified and authorized to operate a Government vehicle;
- training records; and
- accident reports.

We also requested the home-to-work authorizations for all APHIS and FS employees included in our testing sample. For APHIS, we were able to obtain the home-to-work authorizations for the applicable employees included in our testing sample. On October 26, 2017, OIG received FS' submission of all home-to-work authorizations. However, FS' submission was a large zip file submission that did not easily allow us to verify the count of FS home-to-work authorizations. We decided, based on the time it would have taken to analyze data on the zip file, not to review each of the individual home-to-work authorizations provided by FS on the zip file. Instead, we relied on and analyzed updated FS home-to-work counts that OPFM reported to Congress.

We also reviewed 25 APHIS and 8 FS complaints of alleged vehicle misuse. These vehicle misuse complaints were submitted from GSA to OPFM from January 2015 to February 2017.⁵⁴ For the 33 complaints in our sample, we obtained:

- descriptions of the complaint,⁵⁵
- agency personnel involved in resolving the complaint,
- the resolutions of the complaints,
- disciplinary actions taken, if any, and
- systems of record for complaints.

To accomplish our objectives, we also performed the following procedures:

- Reviewed legislation, regulations, agency policies, and agency procedures related to fleet management, Government vehicle use, and the vehicle misuse complaint process; and

⁵² Florida and Texas.

⁵³ Pacific Northwest Region and Pacific Southwest Region.

⁵⁴ In our prior audit, we reviewed 43 FSIS complaints of vehicle misuse.

⁵⁵ This included the complainant's description of the complaint. Certain complaints were accompanied by photo and video as well.

- Interviewed OPFM, APHIS, and FS officials to gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of fleet management, vehicle use, and the vehicle misuse complaint process.

We identified differences in inventory counts between two fleet management information systems used by the agencies in our audit. One information system was maintained by a non-USDA entity and a review of it was not within the scope of our audit. The other information system was maintained by a USDA agency. However, we did not verify the data provided by this agency's information system because it was not significant to our audit objectives. We make no representation regarding the adequacy of any agency computer system.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Abbreviations

AGPMR	Agriculture Property Management Regulations
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CY	calendar year
DOE	Department of Energy
FED	Forest Service Fleet Equipment Database
FedFMS	Federal Fleet Management System
FS	Forest Service
FSIS	Food Safety and Inspection Service
FY	fiscal year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GIPSA	Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration
GSA	General Services Administration
IU	Investigative Unit
LERIS	Labor and Employee Relations Information System
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OPFM	Office of Property and Fleet Management
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WEX	Wright Express, or WEX, Inc.

**AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO
AUDIT REPORT**



Office of the Assistant
Secretary
for Administration

1400 Independence
Avenue SW

Washington, D.C.
20250

TO: Gil H. Harden
Assistant Inspector General for Audit
Office of the Inspector General

FROM: Donald K. Bice /s/
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration

SUBJECT: USDA's Management Over the Misuse of Government Vehicles
(Audit 50099-0003-21)

Thank you for your draft recommendations submitted on July 25, 2018. USDA fully supports improved management to address the misuse of government vehicles, and to ensure efficient utilization of its fleet. Below are responses prepared by the Office of Property and Fleet Management (OPFM). Please contact Paul Walden, Chief, Property Management Division, Office of Property and Fleet Management, at (202) 720-7283 if you require additional information.

Recommendation 1

OPFM should implement timeframes and require all USDA agencies to annually justify or dispose, share, or re-assign underutilized vehicles as defined by the criteria set forth in AGPMR Advisory 17-01.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and conducted a detailed vehicle utilization study in 2018 that identified 11,367 underutilized vehicles. In May 2018, agencies were asked to provide justifications for keeping these vehicles and were asked to provide management plans for their fleet with no new vehicle acquisitions until those plans were approved by the Office of the Secretary (OSEC). The final plans were briefed by each subcabinet member to the USDA Deputy Secretary in August 2018. Because of these efforts, in fiscal year 2018 (FY18), USDA will reduce its fleet by over 4,200 vehicles identified in the Department's underutilization study and subsequent agency action. Disposal of additional vehicles from this FY18 utilization study is expected, though these vehicles will likely not be disposed of until December 31, 2018. Beginning in FY19, OPFM will conduct annual utilization reviews of agency fleet and work to further identify assets for disposal, sharing and reassignment.

Recommendation 2

OPFM should reconcile vehicle inventory counts on an annual basis with all USDA agencies, but specifically with any agencies, such as the Forest Service, that may continue to use their own vehicle management information systems to record inventory, cost, and operational data.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and is conducting an in-depth vehicle-level data validation to improve the accuracy of our fleet data. This vehicle-level data validation will be completed by December 31, 2018, and by December 31 every year after. OPFM is also working with the Forest Service to ensure that the Forest Service Fleet Equipment Database (FED), either interfaces or has the ability to upload data to the GSA Federal Fleet Management System (FedFMS) for FAST reportable vehicles, USDAs official fleet management information system, by June 30, 2019. OPFM has issued a policy, Agriculture Property Management Regulations (AGPMR) Advisory 18-01 (<https://www.dm.usda.gov/pmd/docs/AGPMRAdvisory18-01fEDfms.pdf>), stating that FedFMS is the official USDA fleet management information system of record.

Recommendation 3

OPFM should immediately conduct a data call to all USDA agencies, request all active, certified home-to-work authorizations, and immediately update the quarterly home-to-work determinations sent to Congress.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and does issue a quarterly data call for home-to-work determinations. The most recent data call was issued on July 11, 2018 requesting third quarter FY18 determinations by August 15, 2018. The second quarter FY18 report was sent by the Secretary to Congress on July 18, 2018.

Recommendation 4

OPFM should identify a tool (such as SharePoint) to collect and review home-to-work authorization forms so that OPFM can periodically review eligibility for more accurate reporting to satisfy quarterly Congressional home-to-work reporting requirements.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and is testing an Adobe version of the AD-728 form (Request and Authorization for Home to Work) that will populate an Access database to facilitate quarterly reporting. OPFM will work to implement a tool by June 30, 2019.

Recommendation 5

OPFM should coordinate with each USDA agency to identify an employee misconduct investigative unit and route all complaints of employee vehicle misuse to that unit for assessment.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and will require each agency to identify an investigative unit to review vehicle misuse complaints and will route all complaints it receives through the agency investigative units consistent with misconduct policy for vehicle misuse found in Subchapter 3, Chapter 751 of the USDA Department Personnel Manual. OPFM will target completion of this work by December 31, 2018.

Recommendation 6

OPFM should require each agency's employee misconduct investigative unit to assess misuse allegations submitted by the public. The assessment should include identifying risk factors, such as repeat offenders, employee time and attendance records, questionable driving histories, and prior disciplinary actions, and conclude whether the employee misconduct investigative unit should further investigate the complaint or allow the agency to process it.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and will develop and implement directions to agencies requiring assessments that will include identifying risk factors, and concluding with the disposition of whether the investigative unit should further investigate. OPFM will target completion of this work by September 30, 2019.

Recommendation 7

OPFM should develop procedures for agencies to follow when investigating complaints referred to them by their perspective employee misconduct investigative units. Guidance should include, at a minimum: (1) expected timeframes to address and resolve the complaints, (2) recommended courses of action for each complaint type, and (3) documentation to provide to OPFM supporting that corrective actions adequately address the complaints.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and will develop guidance to implement. OPFM currently has an Access database to track vehicle misuse complaints and this can be expanded to capture complaint resolution timeframes, courses of action taken, and types of corrective action. OPFM will target completion of this work by September 30, 2019.

Recommendation 8

OPFM should develop procedures for OPFM personnel to follow when receiving, recording, distributing, and resolving complaints received from the public. This guidance, at a minimum, should include: (1) information to be recorded by OPFM personnel, (2) expected timeframes for agencies to address and resolve complaints once the investigating body is determined, (3) documentation necessary to obtain during the complaint process, and (4) closeout procedures once a complaint has been resolved.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees. As discussed in the response to Recommendation 7, OFPM will draft guidance for recording and tracking vehicle misuse complaints for OPFM staff and agencies to follow. OPFM will target completion of this work by September 30, 2019.

Recommendation 9

OPFM should require each agency to log and track relevant data (such as employee name, time and attendance records, accident history, repeat allegations, and prior disciplinary actions) to help the employee misconduct investigative unit select complaints for further investigation.

OPFM Response: OFPM agrees and will draft guidance to agencies to log and track relevant data, for investigative units to use in determining whether complaints merit further investigation. Along with recommendation 6, 7, and 8, OPFM will target completion of this work by September 30, 2019.

Recommendation 10

OPFM should develop and implement procedures for all USDA agencies to consistently review driver authorizations and qualifications. Specifically, these procedures should require agencies to annually review employee records and annually certify that employees have: (1) authorization to operate a vehicle, (2) a valid driver's license, (3) an acceptable driving history, (4) met training requirements, and (5) certified their authorization forms.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and will develop a certification process to ensure drivers have a valid license, acceptable driving history, driver training, and have appropriate authorizations to operate a government vehicle. OPFM will target completion of this work by June 30, 2019.

Recommendation 11

OPFM should require all USDA agencies to update their policies and establish an effective monitoring system to ensure that procedures described in Recommendation 10 are followed.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and will target completion of this work by June 30, 2019, but notes that funding availability may impact the ability of OPFM to provide oversight.

Recommendation 12

OPFM should establish procedures to monitor and periodically review, at its discretion, agency certifications described in Recommendation 10.

OPFM Response: OPFM agrees and will target completion of this work by June 30, 2019, but notes that funding availability may impact the ability of OPFM to provide oversight.

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